

Stalking in Canada, 2014

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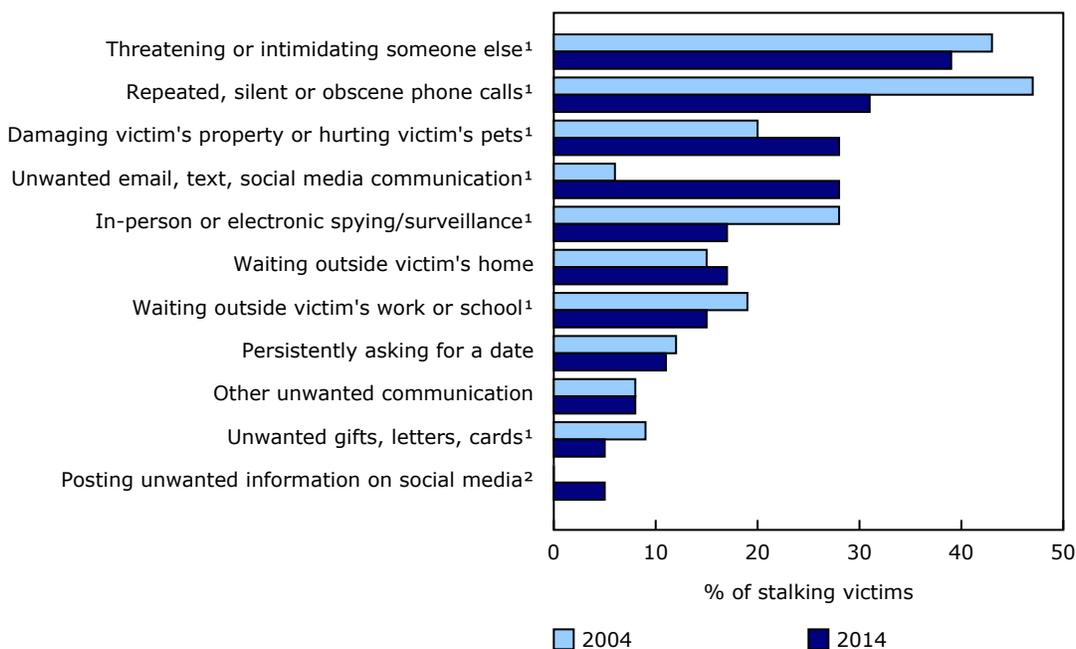
Stalking is a form of criminal harassment under the *Criminal Code* of Canada. Although the overall prevalence of self-reported stalking in Canada decreased from 9% in 2004 to 6% in 2014, the ways in which victims experienced stalking have changed with increased use of technology.

Based on the results of the 2014 General Social Survey (GSS) on Canadians' Safety (Victimization), almost two million Canadians aged 15 years and older—about 8% of women and 5% of men—reported being stalked in the preceding five years. One of the most common types of stalking experienced by victims was unwanted emails, texts or communication over social media, representing 28% of all forms of stalking experienced by Canadians.

Meanwhile, stalking through the use of repeated, silent or obscene phone calls decreased, from 47% of victims in 2004 to 31% in 2014.

The study "[Stalking in Canada, 2014](#)" provides in-depth analysis of Canadians' self-reported experiences of stalking, defined as repeated and unwanted attention that causes an individual to fear for their personal safety or for the safety of someone they know. This study appears as the lead chapter in the annual Juristat publication "[Family violence in Canada: A statistical profile, 2016](#)," which presents detailed information from both self- and police-reported sources.

Chart 1
Changes in most common types of stalking, Canada, 2004 and 2014



1. Results for 2014 are significantly different from 2004.

2. Results from 2014 should be used with caution. Data not available for 2004.

Source(s): Statistics Canada, General Social Survey (4504).

Almost 1 in 5 stalking victims is physically assaulted

Research has shown that while stalking is a serious crime on its own, it can also be associated with further violence. According to the GSS, many stalking victims also experienced physical violence associated with the stalking incident. Nearly one-third of stalking victims (32%) experienced physical intimidation or threats of violence consistent with *Criminal Code* definitions of assault, while almost 1 in 5 (18%) were victims of actual physical violence.

Stalking victims are most often women and young people

As with many other kinds of violent victimization, women and young people were over-represented as victims of stalking. The majority (62%) of stalking victims were female, and almost half (48%) of all stalking victims were 15 to 34 years of age. Even after many other factors associated with a risk of violent victimization were considered, sex and age remained key risk factors for being a victim of stalking.

Stalkers are usually males known to the victim

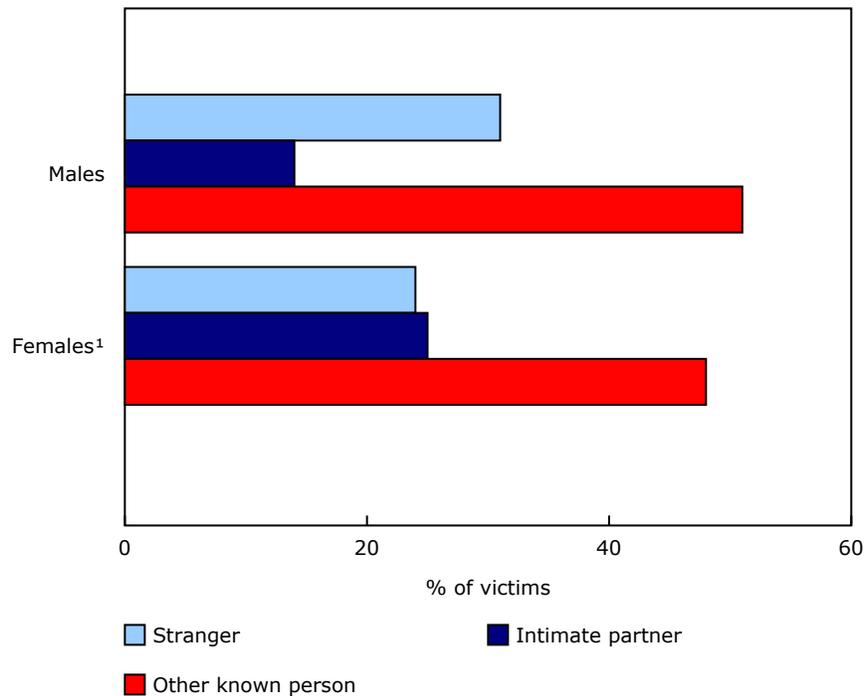
Close to three-quarters (74%) of victims indicated that the person who stalked them was male. Female stalkers were comparatively less common, and were reported more often by male (25%) than by female (15%) victims. However, the proportion of all victims who said that they had been stalked by a female increased from 2004 to 2014, rising from 15% to 19% of victims.

Most stalking victims (70%) were victimized by someone they knew, while just over one-quarter (27%) were stalked by a stranger. Stalking by a stranger was more common for male (31%) than for female (24%) victims.

Nearly half of all stalking victims (49%) said that the person who stalked them was a friend, acquaintance, co-worker or relative.

Just over 1 in 5 (21%) stalking victims indicated that their stalker was a current or former intimate partner—that is, a spouse, or a common-law or dating partner. Stalking by an intimate partner was considerably more prevalent among female (25%) than among male (14%) victims.

Chart 2
Relationship of stalker to victim, by sex of victim, Canada, 2014



1. The percentages of female victims stalked by strangers or intimate partners are significantly different from the corresponding percentages of male victims.
 Source(s): Statistics Canada, General Social Survey (4504).

One-third of those stalked by an intimate partner experience physical violence

Stalking by current or former intimate partners differs in a number of ways from stalking by others known to the victim or by strangers, including the levels of violence experienced and its prevalence over time. Intimate partner stalking also poses a particular risk for women, who accounted for nearly three-quarters (74%) of intimate partner stalking victims. In the five years preceding the 2014 GSS on Victimization, about 284,000 women aged 15 years and older (2% of all women in that age group) had been stalked by an intimate partner.

The levels of violence associated with intimate partner stalking make it the most dangerous kind of stalking experienced by Canadians. One-third (33%) of those stalked by an intimate partner reported that they had been grabbed or physically attacked during the encounter, a considerably higher proportion than among those stalked by other people they knew (16%) or by strangers (12%). More than 2 in 5 (42%) victims of intimate partner stalking indicated that they had been physically intimidated or threatened with violence, and 42% said that the stalking had caused them to fear for their lives.

Self-reported rate of intimate partner stalking remains stable

While the overall prevalence of stalking in Canada decreased from 2004 to 2014, a similar decline was not apparent when it came to intimate partner stalking. Over this 10-year period, there were declines in both stalking by someone else who the victim knew (from 4.9% to 3.1%) and stalking by a stranger (from 2.1% to 1.7%). Over that same period, stalking by an intimate partner remained relatively stable (from 1.5% to 1.3%).

Charges laid in just over 1 in 5 stalking cases

Many stalking victims reported reaching out to the justice system. Almost 2 in 5 (39%) stalking victims stated that police had been made aware of the situation. Of these, just over 1 in 5 (21%) said that charges had been laid, with assault charges being the most common. One in four (25%) victims who spoke with police indicated that a restraining or protective order had at one point been in place against the person who had stalked them. Of these victims, just over 2 in 5 (41%) reported that the order had been violated.

Intimate partner stalking (47%) was more likely than other stalking types (37% for both stalking by a stranger and stalking by another known person) to be reported to the police. When it came to whether or not charges were laid or restraining or protective orders enacted, however, victims of intimate partner stalking saw similar outcomes to victims of stalking by other people.

Note to readers

The report "Family violence in Canada: A statistical profile" is produced by the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics under the Federal Family Violence Initiative. It provides the most current data on the nature and extent of family violence in Canada, as well as trends over time, as part of the ongoing initiative to inform policy makers and the public about family violence issues. In addition to a focus chapter on self-reported stalking, four additional chapters designed to present overviews of police-reported family violence, intimate partner violence, family violence against children and family violence against seniors are included.

The target population of the 2014 General Social Survey consisted of people aged 15 years and older in the provinces and territories, and excluded people living full time in institutions. People residing both on and off reserve were in scope for the survey. It is important to note that analysis specific to small sub-populations may not be possible due to small counts.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey numbers 3302, 3315 and 4504.

The *Juristat* article "[Family violence in Canada: A statistical profile, 2016](#)" ([85-002-X](#)) is now available.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca).